

Mahesh Pandey, a volunteer with Asha Parivar, was visiting Imphal to participate in Irom Sharmila solidarity fast held in September 2007 when he was invited to Tumulpur district of Assam by Biju Barbaruah, coordinator of Asha Darshan. Mahesh spent four days with Asha Darshan team and helped organize a RTI Camp outside the office of Tumulpur BDO. In the past there have been awareness meetings and campaigns but this was the first time a RTI camp was organized outside a government office in all of Assam. Biju stated that the camp was successful as people are still coming to their office for follow-up on their applications. Some NGOs have approached Biju requesting help to organize a camp at their locations.

For further campaign news please visit: <http://www.ashaparivar.org/cms/rтинews>

Report of Right to Information Campaign, Assam

A one-day RTI camp was organized on 25th September 2007 at Tamulpur development block of Baksa district in the state of Assam. The camp started at around 10 a.m. by the roadside next to the Block Development Office of Tamulpur. The sections of the RTI act were written on chart papers in Assamese and Bodo languages and put up. A banner was put up which said "Boycott Bribery, Right to Information Campaign Assam". On reading the banner the BDO (Block Development Officer) said that we should not put up that banner since it would malign their image.



The women of the village slowly started coming to the camp. By noon around 300 women had gathered. Ambika and Savita, volunteers of Asha Darshan, informed them of the usefulness of the camp and the RTI Act. They were told how they could use this act to get a their work done which was stuck in some government office. The PIO of Tamulpur block, Asst BDO Manoranjan Sharma was around. When we met him and asked about RTI, he said that he had received training on it. However no one had filed an application in his office. He agreed to come to the camp and give information to the women about RTI. He told them that it was possible to ask the reason for one's work not getting done in any government office. Under this act the officers of the appropriate section of the government office are obliged to answer. Manoranjan Sharma talked about various aspect of RTI for around an hour.



After his speech one by one the women from the village asked him questions like - What happened to my Indira Awaas Yojana application that I had put in 3 years ago? Someone else asked - What happened to my ration card? The women gathered around Asst BDO Manoranjan Sharma and barraged him with questions. Asst. BDO Manoranjan Sharma was overwhelmed with such a lot of questions and with difficulty managed to pacify the women. He assured them that he will take action on all the applications.

Pranav Saakiya put an RTI application in front of the PIO Manoranjan Sharma. He wanted to know the details of all shelters that were built under the Indira Awaas Yojana in all villages in Tamulpur block within the last 2 years. He requested a list of the same. The PIO accepted his application with a fee of Rs. 10 and signed on a copy of the application. In this way the first RTI application was filed in the Tamulpur development block and this marked the start of a transparent system and a movement to establish democracy in its true sense.



Thanks...

Mahesh

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